

# INDIA HARKING BACK TO PAST

## PUTIN'S VISIT



CENTRE  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS

Comment

10/2018

[www.csm.org.pl](http://www.csm.org.pl)

# IN FA

**Dr. D.K. Giri (Prof.  
International Politics, JMI)**

Comment published on courtesy  
of India News & Feature Alliance  
(INFA).

India News & Feature Alliance  
(INFA) - CIR's partner in New Delhi  
is an independent communication  
agency, established in 1959. INFA  
offers a daily fare of news,  
features and analysis by experts  
on Indian politics, business and  
economics. It also reports major  
developments in India and its  
States as also about international  
relations.

**Russian President Vladimir Putin made New Delhi revisit its days of non-alignment, on his visit last week. His visit aimed at selling S-400 air defence systems worth USD 5 billion. New Delhi signed the contract to buy these in its national interest, and to re-assert the independence in pursuing her foreign policy. As United States is threatening sanctions against those buying defence equipments from Russia under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), New Delhi expects the US to provide the presidential waiver in its defence transactions with Russia.**

### INDIA HARKING BACK TO PAST

#### PUTIN'S VISIT

| Dr. D.K. Giri (Prof. International Politics, JMI)

2

### INDIA ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

Obviously, this is a radical departure from NDA government's policy of stitching strategic alliances and partners. New Delhi has, in the recent past, broken several conventions in making alliances, especially with Israel, Japan and the US etc., formation of Quad involving the latter countries – the US and Japan. To be sure, one is amazed at India's insistence on buying sophisticated weapons from Russia in the name of defending its national security etc., and with its fascination for an independent foreign policy.

One expected the NDA government to learn from our past mistake of non-alignment, and independence. Being independent and its euphemism non-aligned, is an impractical position. No country in the world, however powerful, can be independent, if it has to remain in a relation of interdependence with several countries.

India, since its independence, a poor country followed an independent policy at a heavy cost. It had to spend enormously in defence to guard itself against Pakistani aggression and Chinese expansion fought wars with both and lost against China ceding territories. Look at other two models, Germany and Japan, and secondly the European Union. Both the models have succeeded whereas India's practice of non-alignment failed.

### COUNTRY'S DEFENCE POLICY

Germany and Japan did not spend on defence and rose to be big powers, whereas the European Union countries ceded their sovereignty partially for the sake of collective growth and prosperity. India tried to maintain equidistance from both the Superpowers, remained non-aligned and paid heavily. As it was correcting the fault lines it fell again into the old trap as evidenced in this deal.

One would question the indispensability of buying these weapons. Can India defended itself against China or compete with it, on its own, despite possessing the S-400s? Will it not need external support in containing China? Is New Delhi expected to distance Russia from China and Pakistan? These are the questions South Block would find hard to answer.

### INDIA HARKING BACK TO PAST

#### PUTIN'S VISIT

| Dr. D.K. Giri (Prof. International Politics, JMI)

3

---

Buying these weapons in the face of American sanctions is a risk India is taking. The US considers India an ally in the Indo-Pacific region, and a counter balance to China; Israel, Japan, Australia have moved close to India, partly at the behest of the US. The US has disowned Pakistan and is checkmating China in many parts; both China and Pakistan are antagonistic to India. More important, the US is a donor, Russia is a seller. The US gives financial and technological support to its allies, like it did to Pakistan, but the Russians' sell their weapons, and extract heavy returns.

What was the need for India to change partners, preferences and risk its security, and hamper its economy? India under NDA says it will not be drawn into an "either us or them" game. But that is not realpolitik. One has friends and adversaries and one cannot please all, or "run with the hare and hunt with the hound". It has to make a choice. New Delhi just undid the choice it had made.

The other perspective in this recent deal with Russia is the spending on defence. If New Delhi has the friendly assurance of support from military powers, why should it be spending heavily on defence? It needs the resources for its development -- education, health, infrastructure, energy, etc. A strategic partnership would save India from spending its resources on defence.

### INDIA'S INTERESTS IN THE REGION

I have argued in this column that India has two options in its foreign policy vis-a-vis its two adversaries, China and Pakistan, mainly the latter. The options are dialogue and peace or deterrence and conflict. As India is not able to normalise relations with Pakistan, it is living with the second option of conflict. So Pakistan in alliance with China will be a security threat for India. How does India plan to deal with the escalation of conflict at the borders? Will it do so by continuously buying weapons from all possible sources, or rely on allies to save its resources.

The second course is what is in India's interest. On a dispassionate evaluation, this deal will hit India's fundamental interests, national security, as well as development imperatives. I know many apologists will kick the dust to say one is advocating a pro-American policy, compromising our national prestige, sovereignty etc. I am sure the best way to defend one's national interest is to keep the country safe, countrymen healthy, happy and developed. It does not matter whether you

### INDIA HARKING BACK TO PAST

#### PUTIN'S VISIT

| Dr. D.K. Giri (Prof. International Politics, JMI)

4

---

do it through non-alignment or alliance-building. Standing on a phoney national prestige at the cost of huge critical resources is uncalled for.

### RELATION WITH RUSSIA

The other areas of collaboration entered into or reconfirmed are welcome. The two countries signed eight pacts in the fields of space, nuclear energy, railways, etc. Russia has been, in more than one way, a close friend. So having multi-sectoral collaboration with Russia is useful. Russia commissioning a second nuclear power plant in Kundankulam, training India's astronauts as New Delhi aims to launch its first crewed space mission in 2022 are good news.

Coming back to the arms deal, India is the world's biggest arms importer. It is not a credit that India should claim. On the contrary, India, the apostle of peace and non-violence, should be the biggest arms buyer is an anachronism.

Secondly, Russia is the clear winner in the biggest arms deals in the recent times. It is opposed to India's policy in the Indo-Pacific. It does not accept India as a counter balance to China on which Russia is dependent upon for energy, army sales, and investments; with all this, India engaging in such a big deal against standing sanctions is not a wise step. The decision makers in South Block seem saddled with the framework of non-alignment. In re-building its foreign policy, New Delhi, is following the Lenin's dictum, "one step forward, and two steps backward."

(Copyright, India News & Feature Alliance)

**Dr. D.K. Giri (Prof. International Politics, JMI)**

Centre for International Relations (CIR) is an independent, non-government analytical centre established in 1996 which deals with Polish foreign policy and the most important issues of international politics. CIR is active in research, education and publishing, organises conferences and meetings, and participates in international projects in collaboration with similar institutions in many countries. CIR creates a forum for debate and exchange of ideas in matters of international politics, relations between states and challenges in the global world. CIR's activities are addressed above all to local-government officials and to entrepreneurs, as well as to officials of the central administration, politicians, diplomats, political scientists and the media. In 2014, CIR was again recognised as one of the best think-tanks in East-Central Europe in the study "The Leading Public Policy Research Organisations in the World" conducted by the University of Pennsylvania.

